



DON'T YOU BE TAKEN FOR A FOOL

- Being fooled. No one wants that to happen to them do they?
- But it does happen, and it happens often.
 - It could happen to you.
 - It could be happening to you in your life at this age.
- Let me ask you a question.

Q When a person is being tricked, or misdirected successfully, do they realise it?

- For example, a magician will make someone focus on something in one direction in order to disguise what they're doing in another.

A No, by definition, if they're being tricked then (at least at first) they have no idea.

- Sometimes they think they're being smart, or having fun.
- This happens to people in life.
- Take desensitisation for example.
 - Our senses are useful things, given to us by God, but if we dull our senses, and our intellect, say, by getting drunk, then we're in a very vulnerable and dangerous position, but we don't sense the danger at all.
 - Drunk people are unaware. They think they're having fun.
- This can happen, not just with the obvious things, but the more subtle dangers, like the world's entertainments.
- In the Bible it says:
"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."
- The serpent was called more subtle than all the animals in Eden, and that Snake has been subtly tempting and tricking men and women, boys and girls ever since.

- The tricky thing about it is that the person being tricked usually has **no idea**, and thinks they're having a great time and are in complete control.
- **But** the opposite is true.
- Take watching **violent** or **explicit videos**.
 - The more a person does this the more their **character is changing** and their **senses** are becoming **desensitised** to violence and unclean things.
 - But they **can't feel** it happening.
 - So they're more likely to **copy** that behaviour **without seeing** any **danger**, or **feeling** the **pain** of their **conscience** about it.

-They're also being slowly convinced that such things are '**cool**' or **desirable**, because such videos often glamorise such things.

- So their **affections** are being **manipulated** to love sin.

- But all the time this is happening they don't realise it because they can't feel it slowly affecting them.
- What I'm saying is that **sin changes you**.
- Pride grows like growing blind.
- Pride is one of the most deadly sins
 - makes you feel that you're always right.

- The reality of sin is of course very different from the glamour,
 - but by the time the young desensitised person realises this, it's too late, and they've become corrupted, and hurt.

- Satan lures his prey in, then springs his diabolical trap.

- How does he lure?

With the young he usually finds it relatively simple.

- He gets them interested in something that catches their eye.

-Something desirable

-Something with a promise (a promise that isn't kept).

- Like food on a mousetrap. Appealing to their appetites.

- Did you know there's a snake called the 'spider-tailed horned viper'.

-It moves its tail just like a spider would walk, and the end of its tail looks just like one.

-A bird might be attracted to look and desire to eat the spider, so it comes and tries to eat it.

-The bird thinks it's got the upper hand, but just as it tries to eat the spider, the snake attacks from the rock it's been hiding behind and takes it in his jaws.

-You can see this online.

- This is just like that old serpent Satan and us.
- Except the lure isn't a spider, it's a whisper

-"If you wear this, people will give you attention".

-"If you listen to this you'll get secret pleasure"

-"If you act like this you'll be popular"

- "If you talk like this you'll be strong"
- "If you do that thing you'll get gain"
- "If you take that thing you'll be rich and satisfied"

- The young person never stops to think if this is all true.
- Just like the bird, they're being attracted, they're being tricked.
- Take aggression and violence for example.
 - You may have been fooled into thinking that a person who acts in such a way is strong.
- The world might make you believe that - with its movies for example.

(And by the way, it's not just the boys who are tempted like this, girls can be violent and especially verbally and emotionally violent.

- From a young age the world teaches some to use their emotions as a weapon or to manipulate people.
- Usually because they're inadequate in expressing themselves in a rational way)

- But, for example, losing your temper isn't being strong.
- Think about it. Lashing out verbally or physically is a loss of control.

- If someone loses control then they're
inadequate,
unskilled,
weak,
deficient,
unable to be strong enough to control their passions.

- But you may have been fooled into admiring such things, thinking it's a strength.

Wrong

- You've been lied to, taken for a fool.
- Satan does it all the time to the young because he has no respect for you.
- If you believe his lies, you're not wise.
- Sometimes I hear the phrase "that person is worldly wise"! What a contradiction in terms!
- If you're a worldly person then you're not wise at all, but a fool.
- Look at how the Bible explains the seduction.

- We read Proverbs 9.9-18 Here we have the **world described as a foolish seductive woman** trying to tempt people into her house of sins

"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and

bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell."

- Look elsewhere at Proverbs 1.10-19 Here is the **neighbourhood gang**.

Did you think the Bible doesn't say anything about gangs?

The Bible says everything.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say,

"Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:"

My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. (They hurt themselves and ruin their lives to lose them) So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners"

- This is the self-harm of bad behaviour
- Tempted to be abrasive and nasty - you rob yourself of experiencing kindness and genuine affection from others because people will treat you like you treat them.
- People who steal think they've gained something, but they lose more than they gain - they lose their character.
- **Sometimes** the **world** will **show itself** for what it is - **no real friend** of yours and won't deliver what it promised to.

But by that time, your **affections, your feelings**, have been **so ensnared** that you **can't get away**.

- It's like an abusive relationship.
- Sometimes a person has loved someone or something they shouldn't and they can't easily change their feelings or desires.

-They're all tied up in their love for the world,
but it's ruining, damaging and hurting them,

- but as one old Christian said "they kiss the chains that bind them".
- The world can beat a person up, but they'll go back for more!

- And it all started with a little "innocent" temptation that was so appealing, so attractive.
- It was just small, it wouldn't do any harm.
- But sin leads to another and another.
- To bigger and worse things.
- And all along you're being changed and corrupted, your appetites are changing, you're getting a taste for wrongdoing, lusting after sin.

It will pull you far from God, far from safety.

- (Eve was tempted with the fruit that was good to look upon).

- Beware, the way of sin is downhill

-It will take you further than you wanted to go

-Show you more than you wanted to know.

- First you walk that way,
- then a bit faster,
- until soon you're running into the flames!

- You might think you're in control, but you're like a puppet on a string.

Easily tricked, easily tempted.

- We see it over and over, those of us who have taught the young for years.
- The same behaviour, the same sins and attractions.
- Often the young think they're being original.

But they're actually becoming a terrible cliché.

- The young rebel who doesn't care, bad attitude, a show-off, an attention seeker.

-But inside he's insecure,

has to follow trends to feel confident (he looks like a hundred other people),

he acts like he doesn't care because he's lonely, or he's been hurt in life,

or he's had no real love, friendship or affection.

- Same for the girls.

-There's the loud, brash girl, rude and showy.

- Wants to get the attention of the boys, but acts like she doesn't care.

- But that's really all she cares about

spends hours on her appearance, and thinks of nothing else (certainly not her soul).

- She needs the attention because she's desperately unhappy,
- but she's looking for love and affection in all the wrong places.
- Learning to love the world.

-She thinks she's worldly wise,

but inside she's shallow and lacks real understanding.

- We see it over and over

- I hope I'm not describing anyone here.

I don't know any of you.

- I heard of a boy recently who can't behave at all.

-Always disrupting his class.

- No doubt he thinks he's being free, having fun.

"No one can control me, no one tells me what to do!"

- But the truth is that Satan is telling him what to do, and he's doing exactly what he's told,
- doing what he's been tempted to do like a puppet, which will make him very unhappy.

- He might think he's getting his own way, but he's actually doing himself a terrible act of self harm.

- The demon possessed man in the Bible cut himself and lived amongst the tombs away from others in darkness.

- Maybe he thought he was free and at peace!

-But I wouldn't want that freedom or peace.

- That's the freedom of jumping off a cliff (like the herd of pigs did)
it's the hollow peace of a graveyard!

- That poor boy I mentioned won't be invited on camps,
he'll be excluded from classes and Friday meetings,
he'll be unteachable and therefore in the dark about many things - ignorant.

- He's made himself lonely, and stupid in a harmful act upon himself.

- And all the while he thought he was getting his own way, and having fun.
- When he realises actions have consequences, he'll be too blind to see it was he, himself that brought this about,
- so he'll try to blame everyone else for his own behaviour.

- We see this type often after being told off by a teacher.

-Sitting alone in a corridor with a very unhappy expression on their face.

- Satan stands not far away,
but he's smiling and rubbing his hands together,
- but the poor youngster is completely unaware.
- It's very sad, we feel for them, we want to rescue them, to save them from themselves.

But we can't.

- All we can do is to warn.
- And to point them in the direction where they'll find **the One who can**.

The One who'll say "Come in, let Me give you shelter from the storm"

- You know Who that is, right?
- They've told you about Him I'm sure.
- He's a glorious Person.
- We're no match for Satan,
but Satan is no match for Him, not even close.

- When you're close to Him Satan slithers away in fear.
- Because This Person, once, won a great victory over Satan, and has been doing so ever since in the lives of those He saves.

-What was that victory?

- It happened on a Roman cross.
 - Satan thought he could tempt Him down from it. "Save yourself" he got people to cry.
 - Thought he could get Him to give up what He was doing.
- You see, all that sin we commit needs to be dealt with by God.
- God is Just and Holy.
- All that rebellion and false worship of the world is a great offence to God.
- It's idolatry, it breaks the first commandment.
- You see God isn't merely sad at sin, He's angry at sin.
- **Actions have consequences**, as I've said,
- **and, more surely than night follows day, God will avenge Himself of His broken law.**
- Now, Satan has experienced this punishment, and desires all of you to experience it too.
- But at the cross that glorious Person, with might and strength would not be moved.

What was He doing?

- He was suffering for the guilty, taking the punishment for those who would trust in Him
 - so they could go unpunished and freely forgiven.
- He was offering up a perfectly righteous life.

-A life we could never live

-And a punishment we could never bear

Amazing.

- I read a biography recently about a notorious outlaw called '**Billy the kid**'. A cowboy in New Mexico.
 - He is said to have killed 21 men by the time he was 21 years old.
- But later he wanted a pardon from the Governor,
- he wanted to die a free man, but he went to the wrong person.
- He did attend a Baptist Church but never sought God as far as I know.
- He died without a pardon, here below or from the Great Judge above.

• Do you feel guilty, insecure sometimes?
Scared, lonely?

- You know that at the **foot of that cross** is the **most secure place in the world**.
- By His side is the place you'll never feel alone.

- If everything crumbles in your life,
-if Satan stirs up a storm around you,
-and all the things in the world you loved -and lived for fail you,
 - then that old cross won't.
 - It's Christ and Calvary of course.
 - Did you know there was an earthquake at the time of Christ's crucifixion?
 - Darkness and dread.
 - Cling to the foot of that cross in your mind's eye
 - when the whirlwind blows around you.
 - When the earthquake comes and the ground falls away and you can't seem to trust in anything.
 - When that old accuser tries to take you to hell with him,
 - cling to your only hope and don't let go.
 - Cling like your life depends on it, because it does!
 - When the sound of conviction is loud and you almost can't hear yourself think,
 - hold on and don't let go,
 - cry out to Him a prayer in faith
- "Save me!"
- And all of a sudden, the storm will cease.
 - And you'll find yourself in a lovely garden at the beginning of the first day of the rest of your life.
 - And someone will come to you.
 - You might think He's the gardener,
 - but He's your best friend,
you'll find that out soon enough.
 - He'll make you well and clean.
 - He'll make you strong.
 - He'll smile at you and say "follow Me".
 - And you'll think
"that's the Person, that's the way"
 - "no more following those who say 'come with us', but going towards a grave.
 - No more being drawn to that woman's house' promising pleasure but finding hell.

- Go to the house of prayer instead

In our reading in Proverbs 9 it says of that place

"Wisdom hath builded her house, ... Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread ... Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.... Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. For by me thy days shall be multiplied"

- Even life everlasting.
- I hope you find yourself there.
 - Head in the direction of that old cross.
 - Go there and you'll find Him.
 - Don't turn to the left or to the right
 - Go quickly, the time is short.

-If you can't see the way, just head to the light.

- What light?

-Oh, you'll find it in your Bible.

Read it like a map for your soul.

- Then you'll have direction,
a lamp for your feet and a light for your path.
- I may even see you again on the journey:)

Let's pray.